

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in Hangzhou, China

September 4, 2016

President Obama. This is the first opportunity that I've had to meet face to face with President Erdogan since the terrible, attempted coup that took place in July. By taking to the streets to resist the coup attempt, the Turkish people once again affirmed their commitment to democracy and the strength and resilience of the democratic institutions inside of Turkey.

I indicated at the time the unequivocal condemnation of these actions and spoke personally to President Erdogan to offer any support that we might be able to provide in both ending the attempted coup, but also in investigating and bringing the perpetrators of these illegal actions to justice. And I've assured him that our Justice Department and my national security team will continue to cooperate with Turkish authorities to determine how we can make sure that those who carried out these activities are brought to justice and reaffirm our strong support for the Turkish people and Turkish institutions.

I also had the opportunity to express my deepest condolences for those killed and wounded by recent terrorist attacks in Turkey, which sadly have become too common an occurrence, just as they have all around the world. And in the face of these savage attacks, not only do we stand with Turkey and the people of Turkey and express our sympathy for them, but more importantly, we want to take actions to ensure that together, we are defeating the scourge of terrorism.

Turkey is a strong NATO ally, a critical member of the coalition against ISIL. Our military, our law enforcement and intelligence cooperation has helped push ISIL back, especially along the Syrian-Turkish border, but we now need to finish the job. And we discussed ways in which we can further cooperate in that regard.

President Erdogan and I also agreed to continue pursuing a peaceful political transition in Syria, which is the only lasting way to end the terrible civil war there. And together, we'll keep working to ease the humanitarian suffering, make sure that Syrian civilians can once again live in security, and that we can stabilize the region as a whole.

Finally, Tayyip, I want to thank you personally, as well as your Government and the people of Turkey for your exceptional humanitarian support of refugees. Turkey hosts more refugees than any country in the world, and it has been a key partner in providing aid and assistance to vulnerable citizens that have poured out of Syria as well as Iraq. We look forward to doing even more when we host a U.N. refugee summit in—later, at the margins of the U.N. General Assembly. And I—as I indicated to President Erdogan, this is not an issue in which Turkey should be carrying the burden alone. It needs support from all of us, and we intend to provide it.

So, Tayyip, once again, it's good to see you. We're glad you're here, safe, and that we are able to continue to work together to build on the strong alliance and partnership that we've established during the course of my Presidency.

President Erdogan. President Obama, thank you. Barack, thank you. First, it's a pleasure for me to get together with you within the framework of the G-20 summit here in Hangzhou.

In the aftermath of July the 15th failed coup, we've had a telephone conversation, and this is the first time we got together in order to see each other face to face. And I would like to thank you for your support against this coup attempt.

Of course, Turkey and the United States had been a strategic partner and a very close ally. And with you, under your leadership, the alliance between our countries became a model partnership. And the relations between our countries are very special, and they are getting stronger as time goes by, especially the terrorist attacks and the failed coup followed one another, and it's a very meaningful time that we're going through.

And against all of the terrorist attacks around the world, as NATO members, we have to embrace a common attitude. It is impossible for us to remain silent, vis-a-vis these attacks, and we have to embrace the same stance against all terrorist organizations around the world. All forms of terrorism is bad. All forms of terrorism is evil. There is no good terrorist or a bad terrorist; every terrorist is condemned. Every terrorist organization is doomed. And our stance against terrorism is quite obvious.

And against these, especially the developments in Syria and Iraq are very concerning. Our fight against Daesh terrorist organization and other terrorist organizations, PYD, YPG, and our fight against these terrorist organizations will continue, as committed as they have ever been. I hope and pray that—which is—our hope is never to see a belt of terrorism, a corridor of terrorism emerging in or around our region. And in order for that to be eliminated, Turkey will forge a very close cooperation and a solidarity with the coalition forces, and we will prevail out of this cooperation, and we will be very victorious.

And at the same time, with regards to the Fethullahist terrorist organization, our operations are underway within the framework of the rule of law. Against this terrorist, before the coup attempt, we had put together some documentation, amassed some evidence, which we have submitted to the United States. And the post-coup-attempt-related documentation and evidence therein will be amassed, and they will be submitted to our friends in the United States. The efforts are still underway.

We had welcomed a delegation from the American Ministry of Justice and a similar delegation from the Turkish Ministry of Justice will go to the United States. Our Minister of Justice and Minister of Interior will travel together to the United States, whereby they will concentrate their efforts on the elaboration of this evidence. And with this opportunity, I would like to underline once again that our solidarity and cooperation is most welcome, and this summit may be very auspicious for us all.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:56 p.m. in Meeting Rooms 9 and 10 of the JW Marriott Hotel Hangzhou. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as "Daesh." President Erdogan referred to Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish citizen living in exile in Saylorsburg, PA, whose followers were blamed by President Erdogan for the July 17 coup attempt; and Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ and Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu of Turkey. He also referred to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and People's Protection Units (YPG), Kurdish organizations based in northern Syria. President Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Turkey, President Erdogan.

Locations: Hangzhou, China.

Names: Erdogan, Recep Tayyip.

Subjects: China : President Obama's visit; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Sudan : International diplomatic efforts; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Turkey : Attempted coup; Turkey : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Turkey : President; Turkey : Relations with U.S.; Turkey : Syrian and Iraqi refugees, humanitarian situation; Turkey : Terrorist attacks.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600567.